

# Tsunami Lament

The evening bells have just rung for evening prayer.

Our prayer tonight is  
that of gratitude  
that our family and neighbours are safe.  
But our hearts  
are with those families  
who can not say the same,  
who will sleep tonight  
without a son,  
a daughter,  
a mother,  
a father,  
an uncle,  
an aunt,  
a cousin.

Their loss is our loss.  
Even the night birds feel it.

~ Sia Figel

Even the night birds feel it  
your words  
swim the sky  
and through  
red feather clouds  
and blood tears  
i know that we are  
connected  
even in our disconnectedness  
of space

~ Frances Koya

even in our disconnectedness  
of space  
the whole of Samoa is on its knees  
Samoa in Aotearoa  
Samoa in Fiji  
Samoa in Amerika  
Samoa in Hawai'i  
praying and  
swallowing salt tears  
swallowing time  
shoes and soles of feet  
swallowing bones and lives and sheet  
memories of the day before Wednesday  
swallowing distance and space  
swallowing our sea memories  
to taste this pain  
that is ours

~ Selina T. Marsh

To taste this pain that is ours  
To remember one's heart is there  
On that day in September  
At the earliest hour  
They watched the sea disappear  
The bay empty like a valley  
The sea rush back in a moan  
Took the weaver from her fale  
Took the child from warm arms  
Took the elder from his family  
Took the sleeper from her sleep  
The blue deep, deep moana  
There at the sacred heart of us  
That echoes through each of us  
When the panic madness falls  
And the calm tide breathes  
With all Samoa everywhere  
With all of Tonga too  
Remember your hearts there  
And my heart too

~ Dan Taulapapa McMullin

And my heart too,  
along with yours.  
We are reminded  
in the most brutal way  
that we are all connected.

We are reminded  
in the most brutal way,  
that our relationship  
with the ocean  
is never  
on our  
own terms.

We are reminded  
in the most brutal way  
why dominion over nature  
was never a part  
of our epistemology.

We are reminded  
in the most brutal way  
why we know ourselves to be  
simply a part  
of a sacred continuum  
of sacred relationships  
where even  
the ocean is alive,  
where even  
the night birds feel,  
where even  
the rocks have spirit,  
where even  
the blood red clouds

know why they are red.

We are reminded  
in the most brutal way  
the balance of life between  
is sacred, va tapuia,  
endlessly interconnected  
across distance, space, time, species, life, death.

We are reminded  
in the most brutal way  
why long before  
Christ arrived  
on these shores  
we have always been  
a people of spirit  
a people of faith.  
~ Karlo Mila

A people of faith  
A people  
A people of  
A people of faith  
Faavae i Le Atua Samoa  
They said,  
God will protect us,  
They said.  
Samoa is founded on God.

O children of the great and mighty  
Fofaivaoese  
Those of us who watch, and listen  
from the great watery expanse of all the  
corners of the earth  
Hear Samoa's cry.  
Fofaivaoese will not desert you Samoa  
For even now the groundswell of love, support  
and prayers  
Wave after wave after wave will crash on the  
very same tear-filled shores  
which tore our worlds assunder that fateful day  
And will overcome, embrace and lift up  
our people, our aiga, our villages...our Samoa,  
from despair and devastation.

Do not grieve Samoa,  
Outou, matou, tatou...  
With one hand we will hold on to the ancient  
words and wisdom of our ancestors  
And with the other we will grasp the almighty  
power of Le Atua  
As we people of faith  
Calmly but surely...do what we have to do  
Do  
Do what  
Do what we  
Have to do  
To remain...

People of faith.  
We are people of the Vao ese  
We are here, watching, listening  
And waiting....

~ Melani Anae

We are here, watching, listening  
And waiting

Waiting for the sun to lick our wounds dry  
Waiting for the breeze to untie the knotted  
memory  
Left, Swept in by Moana

Aueeee, our fathers cry  
Aueee, our mothers cry  
Auee, our children cry  
Aue, we all cry

We cry salted tears  
We cry silent fear  
We cry mournful alofa  
For our people  
We cry, Aue! We cry!  
~ Allan Alo

We cry, Aue... We cry!  
The strongest of the strong cry  
Through the push and pull of the tides  
And waves of pain and agony  
that crash against the shore of our wounded  
hearts  
we cry, Aue...  
We cry  
We cry tears of blood  
that flow deep through the sea of sorrow  
flow with the whispers of our soft prayers  
ascending above the clouds  
and settle beyond the depths of our soul  
It is there  
that our tears have dried  
dried into a grain of salt  
a grain of salt called faith,  
the one thing we continue to hold on to  
for faith, isn't faith  
until it is all that we have left to hold on to  
it is what will wipe the tears of the strongest cry  
give us comfort in the night  
allow the warm rays of the sun to brush upon  
our skin  
push and pull the greatest memories of love  
with that of the tides  
heal the waves of wounded hearts  
lost in the sea of sorrow  
dry our tears  
and carry us into tomorrow...

~ Christina Pelesasa

...and carry us into tomorrow  
carry us into tomorrow  
carry us until we regain our balance  
until there are no more tears  
to cry.

The driest of eyes keep weary watch  
but there's no blood in the ocean tonight  
just the same steady colour seeping into the  
sky  
blurred horizons proffer  
few answers.

There's a missing deeper than moana  
a grieving hope that knows no end  
for moana won't explain yesterday  
leaving us suspended in  
the now.

~ Kylie Jayne Anderson

The now calm and perfect seas do not answer  
me  
When I ask why you have taken my loved ones  
To never return  
You, earth beneath the oceans, do not answer  
me

When I ask why, you sneezed, and caused the  
sea to  
Tremble  
And release her power on my helpless people  
Did you sky, issue a warning in your many  
colours  
And I did not know  
Did you birds try to tell me, in your cries and  
flying patterns  
And I could not read it  
Did you waves and trees try to tell me  
That the earth was about to move  
And I could not hear nor see your message

Aueeeee!  
Aueeeee!  
Aueeeee!

~Tepora Afamasaga

Aueeee! Aue!  
I moan.  
Silently.  
Yesterday I read a list of loved ones.  
Lost to Moana.  
Yesterday.  
I listened to my niece's fast-paced breathing on  
the phone.  
She gave me names of friends.  
I searched for them.

Today, I cried.  
Silently.  
Today I softly let go.

Vivian Koster

"Let go, let go" he whispered  
But he couldn't really mean it  
and reached out to hold them as well,  
his children, his life.  
One was dead with sand in his eyes  
One was alive with death in her gaze  
holding her little brother close to her heart,  
for ever and ever.

~Emma Kruse Vaai

Cry now loved ones  
Let the salty tears  
Kiss and mix with the receding brine  
And in the healing kiss  
In the warming embrace  
Let us realize  
In the eternal voyage  
That we were connected  
Now brutally disconnected  
But we will be reconnected

Stronger than the pillars of lagi  
Wider than the expanses of moana  
In the peaceful vanua beyond the horizon  
A stronger whole  
Forever glued in deep love  
That was never really shattered  
And cannot be washed away  
Again

~ Teweiariki Teaero

Again, and again,  
I ask myself, what made you so mad Moana?  
What happened there?  
Was it because you'd had enough?  
What caused you to lose your temper, your  
mind, your sanity?  
Again, and again,  
I ask myself, what made you so mad Moana?

~ Vilisoni Hereniko

Again and again I asked myself  
what made you so mad Moana.

Moanawe ask for yor forgiveness  
loe we have failed to recognize your  
mighty presence.

In our busy lives we have failed to take care  
of you and Laueleele.

We have not taken the time to share the stories  
of Tagaloalagi and our ancestors with our  
children  
and grandchildren.

Moana you have once again reminded your  
people that our lives are intertwined with yours.

~Sivai Folausaua Bennett

'O le 'upu fa'amāfanafana

(for my sacred people of Sāmoa)  
Sāmoa, our sacred center  
shook...suddenly...violently...  
reverberations that force  
precious Moananuiākea to  
react, pull back  
resounding echoes of  
chaotic vibrations  
tamaiti terrified,  
simultaneous  
echoes of pule  
penetrate  
air, land, moanasausau,  
moanauli

Uncle Tana said  
it was like  
a tornado in the sea  
turning, churning,  
unnaturally building  
high towards le lagi  
gravity jolting destruction  
cadence disruption  
proverbial stone of  
gladiator proportions  
could be felt here in Hawai'i  
forces of our Gods  
painfully piercing my na'au  
panic unbridled soon ensued  
did my family get swept out to sea?  
our women, our children,  
our men, our land...devastated...

this week has been surreal...  
going about my daily life  
surrounded by  
an unseen, eerie haze  
numb, mourning...  
pre-occupied with worry  
shared images  
of the aftermath  
my students are  
shocked and uneasy  
silence you can cut with a pelu  
this disaster

has put a human face  
to my father's people  
our land is  
no mere dot on a map  
it is living, breathing...Sā...moa  
far across Moananuiākea  
ma ka pae ʻāina o Hawai'i  
amongst the chaos  
raging within me

reach deep  
for an unwielding calm  
a silence that brings me  
back to my center  
strong and resilient  
ever vigilant  
like the ageless cycle  
of Tagaloa  
we will set and rise  
with a light of hope  
one that will  
comfort our people  
ʻyua agi mālie le matagi...

~ Lufi A. Matāyafa Luteru

We cry, Aue ... We cry!  
the day after  
on bended knees  
winded by the heavy losses  
overwhelmed with deep grief  
our dark souls in the bright daylight  
sorrowing by the empty fale  
destruction ruins and debris

we cry, aue ... we cry  
the days after  
the day after  
back on our feet again  
surrounded by the songs of life  
supported by the strength of Samoa  
our clear minds under the shining moon  
listen to the sea breeze  
echoing love from all over Oceania  
our distress feels lighter

years after  
the day after  
we are still here  
living  
by Te Moana Nui a Hiva  
from whom we were born human beings  
living  
by our ancestors  
our sons  
from whom we were born sons and ancestors

and inside us  
forever

our land  
our people  
our memories  
~Chantal T. Spitz

'Ara'ara Huahine

Our people, God's minister  
Our memories, God's children

The wave was a way  
Of saying "Don't ignore me"

Our people, a surfer  
Our memories, a waiter

The sea was sucked under  
Below the reef

Our people, a teddy  
Our memories, a ute

Let's say hello to strangers  
on the beach

Our people, the telephone  
Our memories, the body

Then, late in the day,  
a cold front sweeps

~Teresia Teaiwa

a cold front sweeps  
even in our disconnectedness  
of space  
and i know that we are  
connected  
blood tears and red feather clouds  
swim the sky  
even the night birds feel it

va connects us  
binding us  
to a shared memory  
of birth and blood  
weaving a black thread of mothers  
and children  
even the night birds feel it  
and it hurts.

~ Frances Koya

Ua ta mai le logo 'o tapua'iga o le afiafila tatou  
talosia le agalelei ma le  
alofa

O le tapa'au i le lagi  
I lana puipuiga alofa i'ai tatou  
Ma o tatou tuaoi  
Ae sili ai o tatou alofaaga mo aiga ta'itasi uma  
O le 'a tofafa i lenei po  
E aunoa ma'i latou na pele i o latou loto  
O se atali'i  
Se afafine  
Se tina  
Se tama  
Se tausoga  
Aemaise matua o aiga, nu'u ma alalafaga

O lo latou mafatiaga  
O la tatou mafatiaga fa'atasi lea  
Ua lagonaina fo'i lo tatou fa'anoanoa  
'E manulele o le po

~ Sia Figel

**Tsunami running poem with contributions from Pacific island poets all over the world post-2009 tsunami in Samoa and Tonga. Excerpts of this poem appeared on BBC have your say.**

